

Checkup and immunizations

Your child is developing quickly. Ask your doctor for a developmental screening to check that she's on track. Be sure her immunizations are up to date. Bring her Lifetime Immunization Record card and Childhood Health Record booklet with you. At 18 months, your child may receive some of the following vaccines:

- Hepatitis B (HepB)
- Diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis (DTaP)
- *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib)
- Inactivated poliovirus (IPV)
- Measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR)
- Varicella (chickenpox)
- Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV)
- Hepatitis A (HepA)
- Influenza (flu) vaccine, yearly

If your child has not had her 4th DTaP vaccine, now is the time to get it. For the best protection against pertussis (whooping cough), your child needs all 4 doses of DTaP by 18 months and a booster dose before kindergarten.

A pertussis vaccine booster, called Tdap, is also recommended for older children and adults. Those in close contact with your child, like you, older siblings, grandparents, and child care providers, should get this shot to help protect themselves and your child.

Dental care and checkups

Your child's baby teeth are important because they hold the place for his permanent teeth. Brush after breakfast and before bed. Lift your child's lip and look at his teeth near the gums and behind his front teeth. Take



your child to a dentist if you see white or brown spots on the teeth. Spots may be a sign of tooth decay.

Snacking or sipping juices or sport drinks all day long can cause cavities. Teeth need "breaks" between meals and snacks to prevent cavities. Eat and drink at specific meal and snack times instead of sipping and snacking all day long. This is as important as making sure you give your child healthy snacks.

If your child hasn't had a first dental checkup, it is time to take him to a dentist. Call the Family Health Hotline listed below for help finding dental care.

Healthy eating for your toddler

By this age, your child should be eating many of the foods you eat. If she is also breastfeeding, that's great. You are giving her important nourishment and comfort.

Sometimes your child might want to eat her favorite food at every meal. This is okay as long as she gets other healthy foods, too. Here are some ideas to help you be sure that your child is eating a healthy diet.

- Offer at least one healthy food she likes at every meal or snack. Remember that snacks high in sugar or starch may lead to tooth decay.
- Offer small servings. Give her more only if she wants it.
- If your child is thirsty, offer her water. Offer milk or juice only as part of a meal or snack. She does not need to drink juice. If you do give her juice, limit it to 4 ounces (½ cup) a day.

Your child may not have as big an appetite now as she used to. This is normal because she is not growing as fast as when she was younger. If you are worried about her growth or eating habits, talk with her doctor, nurse, or a nutritionist.

Eat together as a family as often as you can. The whole family eats better when you sit down together.

Keeping Your Toddler Healthy and Safe

Help your toddler explore the world

It is important to make sure your child feels safe as he starts to explore. Keep your home safe so you have to say 'no' less often.

Your child will want to check in with you as he starts to explore. This lets him know that you are still there, protecting him from possible danger.

He may want to do things you have told him are off limits over and over again. This may feel like he is trying to disobey you or manipulate you, but is a normal part of how toddlers learn about the world around them.

Help handling difficult behavior

When your child throws a tantrum or is very upset, try to step back and think about the situation. Is your child hungry, tired, or upset about something? Take a deep breath. Try to think calmly about how to help your child feel better.

Let your child know you can tell when she is feeling unhappy. Talk calmly about what is happening and offer some solutions. For example, "I see you are very upset. Let's sit together until you feel better". Or "I can see you really wanted to play with the houseplants. They are not toys. Let's find something else to play with. What about these pots and pans?"

Notice the things your child does well. Tell her what you appreciate. This shows you care about what she does. She needs hugs and kisses every day.

Feeling frustrated?

Sometimes it is hard to be the parent you would like to be. Have a plan for what to do when you feel frustrated or overwhelmed. Here are some things to try.

- Make sure your child is in a safe place.
- Walk a few feet away until you have calmed down.
- Take some deep breaths.
- Call a friend or relative who will listen and be caring.

It can help to share your thoughts and feelings. Make sure others who care for your child also know what to do when they feel frustrated or angry.

You can get support by talking to your health care provider, taking a parenting class, or joining a parenting group. Ask about groups and classes at your local health department, community college, place of worship, clinic, or hospital. You can also call the Family Helpline at 1-800-932-4673 or visit www.parenttrust.org for help and advice.

Dangers in driveways and parking lots

Your child is so small that a driver may not be able to see him between cars or when backing up. You can help keep your child and others safe by doing these things:

- Walk all the way around your car to check for kids, toys, and pets before getting in and starting the motor.
- Keep a lookout for children in parking lots and driveways where children could be playing.
- Firmly hold your child's hand when near vehicles.

When you leave your car, even for a short time, take your child with you. Leaving a child in a parked car is very dangerous and can be deadly. Children left in a car can suffer heat stroke. They can also start the car rolling or lock themselves in.

How to keep an active toddler in her car seat

Your child should sit rear-facing in the back seat until she reaches the weight OR height maximum for the car seat, regardless of her age. Once she has reached the seat's rear-facing height or weight limit, use a forward-facing 5-point harness every time.

At this age, it is normal for children to try to climb out of their car seats. Never let your child ride unbuckled! If you let her climb out once, she will try to do it again and again. Make sure the harness is snug. (The harness is snug if you **cannot** pinch any slack in the strap at her shoulder.) If she tries to get out, a good way to teach her to stay seated is to:

1. Stop the car in a safe place right away.
2. Tell her firmly that the car will not go until she gets back in her seat.
3. Wait until she sits down, then buckle the harness again.

Ask others who transport your child to be firm and to buckle up children in the back seat. Teach by example. Use your seat belt and make sure your passengers do, too.

What makes a playground safe?

Always check the equipment before your child begins to play. Stay close to your child, especially when he is climbing. Safe play areas should have soft sand, wood chips, or rubber padding under climbing toys and swings. They should have small-sized slides and gyms made especially for toddlers that are separate from equipment for older children. Make sure that swings have seats that hold children in on all sides.

